

Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell - Vice Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Hearing on the President's FY2003 Budget Request  
For Indian Programs and Services  
(Agencies Appearing: Bureau of Indian Affairs; National Indian Gaming Commission;  
and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA))

March 14, 2002

---

Good morning, and thank you Chairman Inouye for holding the Committee's last hearing on the President's FY2003 Budget Request.

Today we welcome old friends Neal McCaleb from the BIA, Montie Deer from the Indian Gaming Commission and a new friend, Ms. Diane Regas, from the EPA. I welcome you all to the Committee.

It may be obvious to some, but I think we need to be reminded that this Budget Request must be viewed against the backdrop of the war on terror and homeland security. Clearly, that is where our nation's focus is at the present time.

Nonetheless, there are great needs in our Native communities.

The President's request includes a \$20 million overall increase for BIA programs and I am happy to see more attention on Indian education and economic development for the BIA.

Increases are proposed for

* Indian trust activities	+ \$ 70 million
* TPA	+ \$ 24 million
* Indian Tribal courts	+ \$ 4 million
* Indian energy development	+ \$ 2.1 million and
* Contract Support Costs	+ \$ 3 million

In January, 2002, President Bush signed the "No Child Left Behind Act" which included the "Native American Education Improvement Act" that I am proud to have introduced along with the Chairman.

I commend the President for his request of nearly \$293 million in new funds for Indian school construction.

I believe that there are other ways to help get more Indian schools built, such as school bonding, and I hope the Administration considers supporting that idea. I know that our Assistant

Secretary has supported the idea in the past.

On September 28, 2001, the GAO reported that in many categories, BIA schools fail to produce the kind of education Indian children need so badly. I quote from that report

“The academic performance of many BIA students, as measured by their performance on standardized tests and other measures is far below the performance of students in public schools. BIA students also score considerably below national averages on college admission tests.”

Of all 185 BIA schools, Indian Tribes already operate 121 of them through grants or under Indian Self Determination Act contracts. The BIA continues to operate the remaining 64 schools.

The President’s request includes a proposal to bring competition to these schools by way of a “privatization initiative”.

I believe in competition but I think we need to look at it carefully and ask probing questions such as:

Q1. Can we provide incentives so that the Tribes would want to assume control of the schools?

Q2. What role would Tribal governments and local school boards play in the selection of a private contractor?

Q3. What experience do the current contractors have with Indian culture and people?

I will reserve the balance of my time for questions for all of our witnesses Mr. Chairman but would ask unanimous consent that my formal statement be included in the record.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

\* \* \*